

THE
DANGER

Gull. Lancaster R. D. Hen. Ep.
OF A

Death-Bed Repentance

Preach'd lately in the Parish Church of
CHILSWICK in A. 1745

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Imprimatur

Guil. Lancaster, R. P. D. Hen. Ep.
Lond. a Sacris Domest.

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THE
GREAT DANGER
AND
UNCERTAINTY
OF A

Death-Bed Repentance,

As it was Deliver'd in a

Funeral Sermon

Preach'd lately in the Parish-Church of
CHISWICK, in *Middlesex*.

*Humble thy self before thou be Sick; and in the time of Sins,
shew Repentance, Eccles. 18. 21.*

*When a Wicked Man Dies, his Expectation shall perish; and the
Hope of Unjust Men perisheth, Prov. 11. 7.*

Published chiefly for the sake of the ordinary sort of Inhabitants of that Parish.

L O N D O N,

Printed for *W. Croke* at the *Green Dragon* without *Temple-Barr*, 1693.

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LONDON:
Printed for W. Crooke at the Green Dragon without Temple.
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The Preface

To the Inhabitants of the PARISH
of CHISWICK in the County of
MIDDLESEX

SUCH formerly hath been, and in some measure still is, that great Weakness and Indisposition of Body, under which I have labour'd, that I have not been able to go through with my Duty with that Vigour and Constancy, as a better measure of Health would have enabled me to have done: In particular, my Weakness hath disabled me from making those frequent Visits to my Neighbours, by going from house to house, (as I thought my self oblig'd) to instruct the Ignorant, Warn the Unruly, Rebuke the Obstinate and Profane, and to stir up all sorts of People to the Practice of their Duty, and Amendment of their Lives, where there should be most need or occasion for it: Neither, it may be, would the Iniquities of the times, or the Humour of the Age, be able to bear it, had such a thing been undertaken by me; because I find Good Counsel and Advice are very Unwelcome to the Generality of Mankind; and they who

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who stand in most need of Admonition and Reproof, are commonly the greatest Despisers of it. For such

Prov. 14. 9,

16. 5. 17,

22, 30. 6

15. 12

Fools as make a Mock of Sin, usually make a scorn of Reproof too, and therefore give but small Hopes of their ever being Reclaim'd, or Growing better, which therefore cannot but render their Condition so much the

more Desperate. For the Wise Man hath assured us,

Prov. 15. 10. He that hateth Reproof shall Die

And, Eccles. 2. 6. He that hateth to be Reprov'd

is in the way of Sinners, that is, in the High way to Ruin and Destruction, as all Wicked Men are, who stop their Ears against Instruction and Reproof.

And tho' I have not been backward in Publick to warn all such among you of their Great Guilt and Danger on that account; yet there are many of you, who seldom or never see the Inside of a Church; or if they do, little Regard what is Taught and Learn'd there, thinking what is deliver'd to All in general, doth not concern themselves in particular.

To Supply this Defect on my part, and to Remedy what I can, this great Carelesness and Neglect on Yours, I have been prevail'd withal to publish the ensuing Discourse, which was lately Preach'd on a particular Occasion.

I have

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I have propos'd the Example of the Deceased, as a Sea-mark to Caution you against those dangerous Rocks and Shelves, which he run himself upon; the ill Effects whereof he Complain'd of and Lamented with his latest Breath. And this I have done in as favourable a manner as I could, or was Consistent with the nature of my Design, which was to Instruct and Warn the Living, without bearing hard on the Memory of the Dead, who is now pass'd from Man's Judgment-Seat to that of God's: Therefore I have not mention'd any thing of the Name or Circumstances of the Deceased Party, whereby he might be known to those that knew him not before; and have confin'd my self to his behaviour in his Sickness, and what he was pleas'd to take notice of publickly to other People, rather than to my self.

The Duty I here perswade you to is One of the most Necessary and Important in all Religion; and indeed Comprehensive of all others: For True Repentance consists not in a confessing our selves to be Sinners in general; or in being Troubled for our Sins, and Begging Pardon for them when we can Sin no longer. This is no other than gross Delusion and Hypocrisie: 'Tis one of the Snares of the Devil, which he lays for the Ruin of Souls; but Repentance consists in a Hating and Forsaking of all Sin, in the Watching of your Hearts,

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Hearts, and Bridling of your Tongues, in the Restraining of your Passions, and Mortifying the Affections and Lusts of the Flesh, and in Arming your selves against all those Sins and Temptations, which you are Prone to Offend in, and have formerly been overcome by.

This is the True Notion of Evangelical Saving Repentance, to which the Promises of the Gospel are made, and upon which alone we can give you any Comfortable Hopes of Pardon and Forgiveness at the hands of God, either Now, or when you come to Die.

I pray God set these great Truths home upon your Hearts and Consciences; that in this your Day you may see the things that belong to your Peace before they are hid from your Eyes. So prays He that unfeignedly Wisbes the Eternal Happiness and Salvation of you all, and who is desirous to Contribute, (as his Duty obligeth him) what ever lies in his Power toward it.

Oct. 28, 1692.

J. Ellesby.

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THE
Great Danger and Uncertainty
Of a
Death-Bed Repentance,

As it was Deliver'd in a
Funeral Sermon

Preach'd lately in the

Parish Church of CHISWICK.

Hebr. III. 7, 8. *Wherefore, as the Holy Ghost saith, To day, if you will, hear his Voice, Harden not your Hearts, as in the Provocation, in the Day of Temptation, in the Wilderness,*

THE things which accompany Salvation and relate to the Happiness of a Future State, are of that infinite Moment and Concern to every Man living, and the Time allotted by God for the Discharge and Performance of them, so short and uncertain, that we ought to let slip no Opportunity for to admonish and put you in Mind thereof. We cannot too earnestly press and persuade you thereunto on the

one Hand; neither on the other, can you be too diligent and serious in a matter of that vast Importance, whereon endless Bliss or Woe, eternal Happiness or Misery, do most assuredly depend.

This is that which we ought to make the main Business of our Lives, as soon as ever we arrive to years of Knowledge and Understanding, and are able to discern the difference between Good and Evil; for, set aside the prospect of Happiness in another State, whereof we are but Candidates and Probationers in this, and the present Life would not be very desirable for its own sake; neither should we have any great Reason to be fond of it; for the many Troubles and Calamities we daily meet withall in the World, would embitter Life to that Degree, as to make us Disrelish all the Comforts and Enjoyments thereof. The Hopes therefore of a future Recompence of Reward, of a more exceeding and eternal weight of Glory, is the greatest Anchor to support the Spirits of good Men, and able to bear up their Minds, amidst all the Storms of an Afflicted and Calamitous Estate.

But alas! Unless our Hopes of Happiness are firmly settled and well grounded, they will most certainly deceive and disappoint us in the end; for 'tis only Repentance for Sin past, and a Life of Holiness and new Obedience for time to come, that can give us good Hope through Grace, 2 Thess. 2. 16. And make us Partakers of that Glory which hereafter shall be Revealed, 1 Pet. 5. 1.

They are such only, who truly Believe, Repent, and obey the Gospel, and spend some considerable part of their Lives in so doing, that can have any solid Hopes or Comfortable expectations of their future Safety and well being; whereas the confident Hopes of bad Men and presuming Sinners, which Job calls the hope of the Hypocrite shall perish; and like a Spiders Web deceive those that shall trust to it, Job 8. 13.

But

But now to come more closely to the matter in Hand: If we would have our Repentance to be Repentance unto Life, or such as will entitle us to the Pardon of our Sins, and acceptance with God, we must take the Holy Ghost's advice in the Text, *not to harden our Hearts, nor stop our Ears against his Calls and Invi- tations to this Duty, but we must set about it presently, to day while it is called to day, v. 13.* because to-morrow 'tis possible may be too late. We must resolve to Repent immediately and with- out delay, before we have provok'd God too far, or tempted him to give us up, as he hath done many others, to a hardened and impenitent Estate; for 'tis possible a Man may outlive the Seasons of Grace, and Sin away the acceptable Time and Day of Salvation; he may sink and plunge himself so far into that depth of Guilt and Wickedness, by adding one Sin and provo- cation to another, as it will be scarce possible to recover him- self out of the Snare of the Devil, or to free himself from the gall of Bitterness and Bond of Iniquity, be sure not without a great deal of Trouble and Difficulty, nor till after a long time spent in deep Sorrow and Contrition, and in the painful acts of Mortification and Self-Denial.

The time past can never be recall'd, and time to come is ve- ry uncertain, the present time is only ours, and what we can be most sure of; and therefore we should be careful not to let it slip from us without improving it to the great ends and Purposes of Religion, to the reconciling our Selves to God, perfecting the work of Repentance, and *giving all Diligence to make our calling and Election sure.*

To which purpose I shall apply this Advice which the Holy Ghost gives us in the Text, *To day if you will hear his Voice harden not your Hearts, &c.*

The words contain,

First, An Exhortation to Belief, as appears by the Context, express'd here by Hearing or Harkning to the Voice of God.

Secondly, A dissuasion from Impenitency or Hardning our

Hearts through Unbelief, both which are in the third place, reinforc'd by the Authority of the Holy Ghost, whose Exhortation this is, *Wherefore, as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if you will hear his Voice, harden not your Hearts.*

From which words I shall discourse unto you on the Three following Particulars.

First, That Unbelief is one great Cause of Impenitency or Hardness of Heart.

Secondly, That Impenitency or Hardness of Heart is a Sin very provoking of God, and admits of great Aggravations under the Gospel.

Thirdly, I shall endeavour to dissuade from this Sin, and reinforce the Exhortation of the *Holy Ghost*, by laying before you the great and absolute necessity of Repentance, and improving the present Time in order thereunto.

First, Unbelief is one great Cause of Impenitency, and Hardness of Heart. Infidelity hath been judg'd the root of all Sin, especially in Christians, for did they really and heartily believe the great and important Truth of that Religion they make profession of, wherein the motives and arguments to a good Life are so very strong and powerfull, and the threats and dissuasives from Sin and Vice are so convincing and amazing, 'tis scarce possible they should allow themselves in those Vile and Sinful courses which are so rife among Christians, or give such small hopes of their Repentance, as many do.

Did they believe in good earnest, there was a God, a God of that infinite Power and Purity, hating of all Sin, and threatening to punish it in the most severe and terrible manner, they would not dare to affront him, and fly in his Face with their horrid Oaths and Curses, Blasphemies and Imprecations, as frequently they do; they would not live *without God in the World*, nor cast off all Fear and Reverence to his Holy Name and Righteous Laws. Did they believe in Christ, as the Son of God and Saviour of the World, they would not, with the Jews murder
and

and *crucife him afresh* by their oft repeated Sins and Impieties, nor, *do despite to the Spirit of Grace*, by quenching his holy Motions, or resisting the checks of their own Conscience. Did they believe a future Judgment and Life to come, they would stand in greater awe thereof, and be afraid to provoke him, that will be their Judge, and call them to a strict account, for all the Actions of their Lives past, for all the neglects of his Grace, contempt of his Mercy, and Defiance of his Judgment; they would not then increase their Accounts, nor swell them up into such a frightful Mass of Guilt, as will make them one day stand amaz'd at the Sight thereof. Did they believe there was a Heaven for the reward of good Men, and a Hell for the Punishment of the Bad, they durst not make so light of either; but become more Carefull and Sollicitous to secure the Happiness of the one, and avoid the unspeakable Torments and Miseries of the other.

But *all Men have not Faith*, faith our Saviour, no, nor all Christians neither; they do not heartily believe what they profess, *for while they profess to know God, in their Works they deny him; being abominable, disobedient, and unto every good work Reprobate. Tit. i. 16.*

The effect commonly points out the Cause, and the Action usually discovers the Principle from whence it flows: and if so, we may justly suspect the greatest part of the Christian World; to be void of that Faith they make Profession of, and to believe as little of their Religion as they practise of it. Their Lives and Actions bespeak many of them to be rather Atheists than Christians, and downright Infidels than true Believers, for true Faith, or the through Belief of the Doctrine of Christ, would influence their Lives in another guise manner, than what is commonly observed in the World; it would make them live better, be more shy of Sin, and cautious of offending; if therefore Men would examine their Hearts and Souls, or search into the Root and bottom of their Actions, they would find

find a great deal of Infidelity or Unbelief to lurk there, and that Christ amongst all his Nominal Professors and Disciples hath but a small number of those that believe in him aright; or according to the Revelation which God hath given us of his Son, as long therefore as they have an evil Heart of Unbelief it will make them to depart from the living God, Heb. 3. 12.

Secondly, This Impenitency and Hardness, which is occasioned by Unbelief, is very provoking to God, and admits of very great Aggravations under the Gospel, because thereby Men shut their Eyes against the clearest and most manifest Light, and harden their Hearts against the most importunate Calls and Invitation to Repentance. *The former times of Ignorance God winked at*, saith the Apostle Acts 17. 30. that is, God was willing to pass by and overlook in a great Measure, the Ignorance and Impenitence of the Heathen World in respect of what he doth now under the Gospel, *by which he commands all men every where to repent*; so that Repentance is become a more express Command, and strictly enjoynd Duty, now than formerly; and therefore Impenitency is a Sin much more inexcusable and provoking in Christians than it was in Heathens; considering what Means and Motives the Gospel affords to Repentance, What helps and assistances it doth offer towards their Conversion and Amendment, which the World was never made acquainted with before.

God who at sundry times and in diverse manners, spake in times past unto the Fathers by the Prophets; hath in these last days spoken to us by his Son, &c. Heb. 1. 1, 2. Him hath he sent as a Physician to call and invite you to Repentance, and through him forgiveness is preach'd and promis'd to all that in good earnest repent of their Sins, and endeavour to amend and live better for time to come. Acts 5. 31. *Him hath God exalted with his right Hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give Repentance to Israel, and Forgiveness of Sins.*

Nay, the drawing us to Repentance, in order to our Forgiveness

ness is the main Purpose and Design of the Gospel, and of all its Precepts and Commands, Threats and Promises. Now for any Man who believes the Gospel, and understands the end and Design thereof, to stop his Ears against so many gracious Calls and Invitations; to harden his Heart against so much Love and Goodness, to remain stupid and insensible under so many powerful Motives and Inducements as the Gospel affords him in order to his Repentance must needs be a high Aggravation of his Guilt, and mighty Provocation to God. It provok'd him so far against the Israelites, that he swore in his Wrath, they should never enter into his Rest; Heb. 3. 11.

Impenitency therefore hath been always look'd upon as a very great and dangerous Sin, inasmuch as some have thought it to be the Sin against the Holy Ghost, of which our Saviour saith, it shall never be forgiven, either in this World, or in the World to come; Matth. 12. 32. But however 'tis acknowledged by all to be equally fatal and dangerous to the Souls of Men; for no Sin shall be pardoned unless it be thoroughly repented of; and the longer any Man continues in a sinful State, the less hopes he gives of his Repentance every day than other, and consequently the further off from the hopes of Pardon.

To be sometimes overtaken with a Fault, or surpriz'd against our Wills, by a Temptation, is the Frailty and Infirmity of humane Nature, and may draw forth pity in God as well as Man; but wilfully to run or fall into a Sin, and when we are once fallen, to lie and wallow in it, as Swine do in the Mire; when we have done amiss not to be sorry for it, but to laugh at good Counsel and Advice, or fly in the Face of those that shall admonish and reprove us for our Faults, this is that which aggravates a Crime; and adds mightily to the Guilt of it, whereby Sin becomes as the Apostle both express it, *exceeding or out of Measure Sinful*. This is that which provokes the Almighty and stirs up his Anger and Displeasure against his Creatures; this makes him to whet his Sword, and bend his Bow, and pre-
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pare in readines the Instruments of Death. Had *Judas* repented throughly and in good earnest, we have reason to think his Condition had been less desperate; for the same most precious Blood of the Crucified Jesus, was able to atone for *his* Guilt that betray'd him, as well as for *theirs*, that murder'd and put him to Death; but we read of the Repentance of the one, and not of the other, or if he repented, it was without hopes of Pardon and purpose of Amendment, which therefore ended in Death.

Christ dyed for all, but only the Impenitent, for no Sin in it self is too great for Pardon, if repented off and forsaken in time; but 'tis impenitency which puts Venom into every Sin, and makes the Sting so deadly and Mortal, and binds us over to everlasting Punishment, *for except ye repent, ye shall all Perish*, saith our Saviour. *Luke 13. 3.* and again, *Repent and be converted, that your Sins may be blotted out*, saith St. Peter. *Acts 3. 19.*

Implying that they that do not Repent, shall certainly Perish, and no hopes to have our Sins Pardon'd and blotted out, unless we actually turn from them and forsake them in time. In a word, Repentance is all along in the Gospel, made the chief condition of Forgiveness, without which no Sin can be Remitted, no hopes of Salvation given to the Sinner, whether living or dying.

Thirdly, Let me in the next place dissuade you from this great Sin of *Impenitency* and *Hardness of Heart*; and thereby reinforce the exhortation of the Holy Ghost in the Text; by shewing you the great and absolute necessity of a Timely Repentance, or of redeeming the present time to that purpose; and my request is, that every one that reads this, would apply it home to his own Soul and Conscience, and make a particular Application thereof for his own Use and Benefit, in as serious a manner, as if God himself should address to him by Name, as he did to *Job*, out of the *Whirlwind*, *Job 38. 1.* or as Christ

Christ did to *Saul* upon his Journey to *Damascus*, Acts, 9. 4. For the exhortation is the Holy Ghost's, and therefore to be lookt upon as the Advice of God rather than Man.

First, Now my Advice in Conjunction with that of the Holy Ghost's in the Text is this; That you would no longer stop your Ears nor harden your Hearts against the Calls of God, or Voice of his Ministers, when they exhort you to repent and turn from the evil of your ways, and to amend the wickedness of your Lives; but that you would find some time to bethink your Selves of your Spiritual Estate in order to that which is Eternal, and to secure the interest of your immortal Souls, by making a timely provision for them; which can be done no other way than by setting about the great and necessary work of Repentance and good Living, which through Faith in the Merits of your Blessed Redeemer, is the only thing that can secure the endless Happiness of another World, when you leave this.

And be sure you endeavour it forthwith and out of Hand, even to Day, while it is call'd to Day; do it in the time of your Health and Strength, while the most Merciful God doth afford you Time and Space to repent and amend your Lives in, which you cannot hope to do, when Death begins to Approach, Strength to Fail, and Life it self is ready to expire.

'Tis my Duty to take all Occasions to remind you thereof, both in Season and out of Season, and therefore I was willing to lay hold of this, to stir you up to a serious and due regard of the great interest of your Souls, before it be too late, and 'tis your Duty to receive the Truth in the Love thereof, and follow that Counsel and Advice which is intended for your Good, and will put you into a safe and happy Condition, both here and hereafter.

And let me add one thing farther, That Persons of all Ages and Degrees are concern'd in this Admonition, and 'tis their Interest to attend and become obedient thereunto.

Young People ought as the Wise Man exhorts them, to remember their Creator in the days of their Youth, Eccles. 12. 1.

and endeavour to be good betimes, because their Life is as uncertain as that of others; for more die *young* than live to be *old*, and being once arriv'd to years of Knowledge and Understanding, they have an account to give to God as well as older People, and consequently are capable of being Happy or Miserable for Ever.

Elder People ought to set about the amending and reforming of their Lives in time of their Health and Strength, while they may most conveniently do it, as being endu'd with Ripeness of Judgment and Understanding, and in some Measure past the Follies and Vanities of Youth; 'tis time therefore for them to grow serious and act like Men and Women in matters of Religion's as well as Worldly concerns.

Ancient People more especially ought to do this, before Sickness or Death doth sieze them, as having neglected it too long already, and therefore have less time to do it in, than formerly they had. It concerns them then to be careful to lay hold of the present Opportunity while it is yet before them; for if you that are ancient and travelling apace to your Grave, will not grow serious and make provision for Eternity, when, O when! will you do it; you are already arrived at the 11th. hour of the day, have a care of deferring it to the 12th and last, when the dark night of Death is ready to overtake you, when *no Man can work.*

Once more: To this Duty of a timely and undelay'd Repentance, the Rich Man and Man of Honour is oblig'd as well as the Poor and mean Man for as their Talents are more; so their Accounts will be greater than that of their Inferiours; and what through the snares of the World and Temptations of Riches, they are in a great deal more danger to Perish and miscarry; whereupon the Salvation of Rich and Great Men seems by that of our Saviour to be abundance more hard and difficult, than that of other Men, *Matth. 19. 23. Verily I say unto you, a rich Man shall hardly enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.*

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The number of the *Saved* in general is like to be but few and small, *Matth.* 7. 14. and *c.* 22. 14. but be sure that of Rich Men will be the least and fewest of all others, because *not many mighty, not many noble are called*, 1. *Cor.* 1. 26. and therefore it concerns them chiefly to watch and pray against those many great Temptations, which a Rich and Prosperous Estate is wont to expose and lay them open to, and to *work out their Salvation with Fear and Trembling*, because of the difficulty thereof, and to take time enough before hand, for that purpose.

Secondly, Repentance delay'd and put off from the present time to the Future, is matter of great Hazard and Uncertainty, and 'tis mighty odds, if ever such a one doth repent at all.

A dying Bed proves commonly too late, and very improper for this great and necessary Duty. Times of Sicknes and Weaknes are usually taken up with other guile concerns, and attended with many inconvenient Circumstances, which render Repentance very difficult at such a time, and at the best but doubtful and uncertain.

Now the difficulties of such a Repentance may arise, either, *First*, From the Violence or Malignity of the Disease, which possibly may be of that nature as to sieze the Head, stupifie the Brain, and take away the use of the Senses and Understanding, without which no Man is or can be capable of the *least act* of Repentance, nor of doing any thing towards it; and in such a Case to repent is plainly impossible. But, 2. the Difficulties of this Duty arise most commonly from the nature of ill Habits and bad Customs, which are not easily broken, or left off on a Sudden, nor yet new ones immediately planted and introduc'd in the room thereof, for all Habits are produc'd by Acts, and therefore must be weakened by degrees, and worn out by their Contraries, for which Reason 'tis necessary that we accustom our selves to frequent Acts of Vertue, to wear out the Habits of Vice; but then this requires constant Use and Practice, and some considerable length of Time for that Purpose, both

which are commonly wanting, to those that are Sick and Weak, and more especially when they are Dying.

But to make the best of their Case, suppose they should be willing to set about the Duty of repenting before they Die, and may be judg'd able to do something towards it, something like it at such a time; yet no Man living can judge of the Truth and Sincerity of such a Repentance, much less give the *Sick Person* any great Hopes of Comfort thereupon. I am sure we have no warrant from God so to do, there is no promise made to such late and dying Penitents. And to give them any hopes of Pardon without a Promise to ground such hopes upon, is not to comfort but flatter the Souls of Men; and deceive them to their utter Ruine and Disappointment in the end.

For to give wicked Men at their Deaths any Hopes of Heaven, is to give the *Childrens Bread to Dogs*, and prostitute the precious promises of the Gospel to the encouragement of Sin and Vice, which is wholly contrary to the design thereof.

Moreover we have a great deal more Reason to suspect than hope well of such Mens Repentance, because we often find a great deal of Deceitfulness and Hypocrisie in the most solemn profession of Grief and Sorrow, in the most serious and repeated Promises of Amendment, that have been made by sick Persons, when under the apprehensions of Death, and the Terrors of an awakned Conscience; for 'tis usual for such Penitents upon their Recovery, to forget all that ever they Promised to Almighty God, and to grow rather worse than better. We meet with too many instances daily for to confirm us in the belief of this Truth, and I am sorry to think that there should be any among you of this Parish to make up the Number; some of whom I have visited in their Sicknes, been witness to their Vows and Promises solemnly made to God of new and better Obedience, who yet have *started aside like a broken Bow*, and *behave themselves falsely in God's Covenant*, Psalm 78. 37, 57.

Such I do earnestly desire, and in the name of God seriously charge

charge to remember from whence they are fallen; to call to mind the many Vows and Promises made to God in the time of their Trouble and Distress, and to make Conscience of the Performance thereof, as considering that the *bitterness of Death* is not yet past, and they know not how soon God may reduce them to the like or worse Circumstances, lay his Hand more heavy upon them, and fill their Souls with far greater Horrour and Amazement in the remembrance of their *Vile Hypocrisie*, and *abominable Dissimulation*: And how then can they hope, God should hear their Cries and accept their Vows, who have been already so false and treacherous to their Word and Promise; the *last Estate* of such Men and Women, 'tis to be fear'd, *will be worse than their First*, Luke 11. 26.

Thirdly, Consider further, you that are apt to put off the thoughts of Death, and of Repentance with it, if you cannot endure the serious thoughts of dying now, how will you be able to bear up under the near Approaches and feeling Apprehensions thereof, when Death shall overtake and sieze you in good earnest, and there shall be no hopes to escape or avoid it, what, Oh! what will you then do?

The Apprehensions of Death to a sick Man are very Awful and Terrible, but much more so to one that finds himself unprovided for it, to one that is unfit to give up his accounts to God, or appear with Comfort before his Great and Dreadful Tribunal.

If the great and necessary duties of Repentance and Amendment, Mortification and Self denial be judg'd so hard and troublesome to you now, do you think the Trouble and Difficulties thereof will wear off and grow less by your delays, or shall you be better able to master or overcome them, when you shall want both Time and Strength to go through with them.

He that thinks seriously of Death and a future Judgment to ensue thereupon, methinks cannot be so much forsaken of his own Sense and Reason, as not to judge it necessary to make the best and most timely preparation for them that he can, and to use

use all the helps and assistances of Religion for that end and purpose.

For God's Sake, Sirs, consider of these things in time, and bethink your Selves in good earnest before the *Evil days come, and the Tears draw nigh, wherein you shall say, I have no pleasure in them.* Eccles. 12. 1. and let the Advice of the Holy Ghost in the Text prevail with you, though mine cannot. *To day, if you will hear his Voice, harden not your Hearts.*

Remember your immortal Souls are in danger every hour, every Moment that you live in any known wilful Sin, and refuse to repent of it: Life is short, frail, and uncertain, Eternity is at Hand and hastens upon you apace; Heaven and Hell are at the end of your Lives, and stand ready to receive you according as you have fitted and prepared your Selves either for the one or for the other; those Spirits which you carry in your Bosoms must live for ever; *for ever*, I say, in perpetual Bliss or endless Woe, and we have all but a little time before us to secure our Eternal State in; therefore be sure to find time to endeavour and set about it; whatever you neglect, do not neglect the things that belong to your Everlasting Peace; let not the Cares, the Business, and the Troubles of the World, much less the vain and foolish Pleasures and Pastimes thereof misemploy your time, and take you off from this *one thing needful* and most necessary.

You that are *Poor* and *Mean* in the World ought to do this; you ought to find some time to make Provision for your Souls as well as for your Bodies, and to labour as diligently for the *Bread of Life*, as for the *Meat that Perishes*; for according to the Apostle, *Meat is for the Belly, and the Belly for Meat, but God will destroy both it and them*; whereas the *Bread of Life* which comes *down from Heaven* is able to nourish your Souls unto Eternal Life; so as never to hunger or thirst more. Alas! What signifies it for you to drudge and toyl, and take pains to maintain your Bodies, and in the end to lose your Souls, for want

want of setting apart some time, and bestowing some care upon them.

But especially you that are above the wants and necessities of the World, and have so much time and leisure lying on your Hands, that you complain thereof, and know not well how to get rid of it, or pass it away, except it be by *Drinking* or *Gaming*, by going to *Plays*, and running into bad *Company* to divert your selves; such as you, be sure, will be *Inexcusable* before God, if instead of laying hold of the present Opportunity, to make ready your Accounts against the Judgment of the great Day, you shall swell and increase them, by a Life of Sloth and Vanity, Luxury and Profaneness.

To such as you therefore, I address my self, not as the Rich and Great ones of the World, for as such commonly you are apt to *Despise our Counsel* and think your selves above *Reproof*; but as Frail, Dying, Mortal Men; who must shortly Die as well as others, have your Dust mingled with that of the meanest, and all your Pride and Greatness, Niceness and Delicacy converted into Stench and Rottenness, and the Dishonours of the Grave; and moreover as having many more Talents to be accountable for, than your Poor and Indigent Neighbours.

Is not the Day of your Death as certain as that of your Birth or present Life; and tho' you are loth to think of Dying, and willing to put off the Evil Day far from you as a melancholy prospect, and Unwelcome entertainment; as a Subject that is apt to damp your Mirth, and unsuitable to your brisk and gay humours: Yet consider the putting off the thoughts of Death will not prevent its Approach, or make it less Terrible when it comes; nay, quite otherwise, it will make the surprize thereof more dreadful and amazing, and render you so much the more unfit to grapple, and encounter with the King of Terrors, Ecclesiasticus, *chapter 41*. O Death how bitter is the remembrance of thee to a man that lives at rest in his possessions, unto the man that hath nothing to vex him, and that hath prosperity

prosperity in all things; yea, unto him that is yet able to receive meat. The more unwilling you have been to think of, and prepare for Death now, the more astonishing will the approach of it be then, and fill you with dreadful Agonies and Convulsions of Soul beyond what I am able to express, or 'tis possible for you to conceive at present.

Sometimes the Despondencies and Misgivings of heart, which have seiz'd Good men at their Death, have been very great and apt to fill them with Fears and Apprehensions: O how Frightful and Intolerable then must those Horrors and Confusions be, which the Consciences of wicked men usually feel at the approach of Death: *Conscience*, I say, when throughly rowz'd and awaken'd in the sense of their former Guilt and approaching Punishment: the Anguish thereof in some Men and Women hath been so great that they have thought themselves in *Hell* already, and that their condition could not well be worse in the very *Place of Torments*.

Therefore, Sirs, think often, think seriously of these things before hand; call to mind your latter End and prepare for it in good earnest before it comes, and that may be one way to prevent the *bitterness* of Death, and take away the Sting of it.

For without a timely Repentance, and Preparation for it, 'tis not a saying, *God be merciful to me a Sinner*, Luk. 13. 25. or *Lord, Lord, open unto us*, Matth. 7. 11. that will gain us admittance into the Kingdom of Heaven: 'Tis not a little outward Grief, or forc'd Sorrow that can supply the want of Repentance, or be accepted by God in the stead thereof: No, no, To *Repent* is to be so heartily Troubled and Sorry for your Sins, as to grow out of Love with them, and to Resolve immediately to *Leave* and *Forfake* them; to *Repent* is to *Amend* and *Reform* whatever you see amiss in your selves; 'tis to become Wiser and Better for the future, and to lead your Lives according to the Directions of the Gospel, and Precepts of

of your most Holy Religion: And he that doth not endeavour to do this in good earnest, knows not what true Repentance means; he is a stranger to the Grace of God, and is not yet arrived to the condition of Life, or terms of Salvation, and consequently not in a capacity of being sav'd.

Now we cannot but think, (and therefore ought to let you know as much) that it will be too late to do this, when you are Sick and Dying; you will want time and opportunity for it, when life is drawing to an end, and Death with all his Terrours and Affrightments is hastning toward you. O then, what would you give for a little of that Health and Strength, which you have formerly mispent in Sin and Folly, in gratifying the lusts of the Flesh, in complying with the Pride and Vanity of the World, and running your selves into the Snares and Temptations of the Devil; what would you not do to gain a little more of that time and leisure to go through with your Repentance and Preparations for Eternity, which you have wretchedly abus'd and thrown away upon your Excesses and Debaucheries, upon your Lusts and Pleasures, in a Vain, Sinful, and Unprofitable manner; *what Fruit will you then have of those things, whereof you will be asham'd? For the end of those things is Death. Rom. 6. 21.*

Then you will see, that the least hour of your mispent time will be worth more than a whole Age of Folly and Vanity; you will wish then (whatever you may think of it now) that the greater Portions of your life had been spent in the Closet at your Private Prayers, or at Church in the Publick Worship and Service of God, or in seeking and finding out opportunities of doing Good, rather than in Dressing and going Fine, in Gaming and Playing, in Idle and Impertinent Visits, in Censorious and unprofitable Conversation, which engrosses so much of the time of our People of Quality, both Men and Women, many of whom are mightily guilty this way, and are observ'd to spend their time the vainest of all others; Nay, some among them that are pleas'd to take up a shew and Profession of Religion, give us too much reason to fear, 'tis rather for Ca-

from and Fashion sake, than out of Conscience, because so very few are known to become any whit the better or more serious upon that account : And for my part, I do not see how 'tis possible to reconcile the strictness of Religion and a Holy Life (to which the greatest stand obliged as well as the meanest) with those undue Liberties, which our People of Quality do commonly take in many things, and particularly in the instances before mention'd.

O my God ! What account will they be able to give another day ; when all those Helps and Advantages both of *Time* and *Leisure*, *Riches* and *Honour*, *Interest* and *Authority*, wherewith they might do a great deal of good to themselves and others, and become Exemplary to their Inferiours, shall yet be abus'd and misemploy'd in the worst manner that can be, and to become matter of publick Scandal and Offence.

Is this to answer the end of their coming into the World, or the way to prepare themselves for a happy *Exit* or departure out of it ? Is this to live like *Christians*, or to spend their time like those that must be accountable to God for it ?

But Death, when it comes will open their Eyes, though they shut them now, and convincethem of their error and mistake, though we cannot : But then it may be too late and out of their power to retrieve or amend it. Remember you can never be too fit to die, nor too careful and solicitous in preparing your selves for it ; because it is a thing that can be done but once, and Eternity depends upon the Well-doing of it.

He then that shall deferr his Preparations for Eternity, till he comes to be sick unto Death, and ready to go out of the World, hoping that may be time enough for it, will find himself very unfit for so great a Work, and mightily deceiv'd and disappointed of his Hope. For Experience tells us, whatever is done in haste, is commonly done by halves and hurry'd up in a slight and imperfect manner ; many things are wont to be forgotten and over lookt at such a time ; and therefore the Errors and Mistakes, the Omissions and Oversight of a Repentance hid-
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led up in haste when we come to die, must needs be many and great; the least whereof may prove Fatal and undo us for ever.

'Tis Wisdom therefore to set about it now, while time and opportunity are before you; while God offers you his Grace, and stretches forth the Arms of his Mercy to welcome and embrace you, as the Father did the *Prodigal Son* upon his Repentance and Return.

Do it to day, while it is call'd to day, for you know not what a day may bring forth, Prov. 27. 1. or what danger you may run to all Eternity by the least delay: A day, an hour, nay a few Moments may pass you out of this life into the *Regions of the shadow of Death*, and land you upon the *Confines of the other World*, and make your condition Desperate, and for ever Hopeless.

Self. To this Duty of the Text be ye further perswaded from this Spectacle of Mortality now before you, viz. That of a strong and lusty Young Man cut off in the midst of his days, who, before he was seiz'd with his Distemper, was as likely to live as any of you all.

Self. As to the Life and Conversation of the Deceased, 'tis too well known already, and therefore I shall not meddle with it; but with respect to what was most remarkable in his Sickness, I think my self oblig'd to take notice of, and advise these two things,

First. That you would Repent of and avoid those sins, which in his sickness he publicly own'd himself guilty of, and profess to be sorry for; and what they were, I suppose is well known to many here, specially to such as were his usual Companions and Associates.

And therefore to such as you, I shall more particularly apply my self in this Discourse, for whose Sakes it was chiefly design'd at first.

Many great Sins and wilful neglects with respect to God and Religion, he openly lamented and bewailed, during his long and tedious Sickness, which yet several others among you are taken

Notice to be guilty of, as well as he, and therefore you have as much reason to repent of them, as he had, and if you do it not now, you may do it hereafter with less hopes and to less purpose.

Remember those Sins that troubled him, when Sick and Dying ought to trouble you that are now alive and in Health; those neglects of Religion and omissions of Duty, which fate so heavy upon his Soul, may sit heavy on yours, and will do so too, when once God comes to set those things home upon your Spirits, and to awaken your Consciences by Sickness, Death, or any other remarkable Affliction.

How light soever you may make of Sin now, the weight of it will be intolerable then, and without timely Repentance and amendment sink you down to the bottomless Pit of Destruction.

The Remembrance of a wicked and ill spent Life, will fill you with Horror and Amazement, when God shall come to write *bitter things* against you, and make you to *possess your former Iniquities*.

The Spirit of a Man may bear his Infirmities, but a wounded Spirit who can bear? *Prov.* 'Tis possible we may be enabled upon several accounts, to bear up under the one, whereas nothing will be able to support us under the other; but Alas! When the Spirit shall be wounded with Guilt, and the Body at the same time weak and languishing with Pains and Sickness, how will it be possible then to bear up under both? When God at such a time shall frown and look Angry, threaten and hide his Face, *who then can abide*, who will be able to speak Peace; this can be no other than the Gate of Hell, and the beginning of its Torments.

Let the deceased be a Warning and Example to you, God was pleas'd to punish him by a long and lingring Sickness, by a faint, restless, and uneasy Distemper; none of us can tell what he suffer'd and endur'd all that while, but then at the same time his Soul was fill'd with Grief and Trouble, with Sorrow and Remorse in the Remembrance of his Sins past; (and better so than otherwise, Better be troubled for Sin, than go out of the World stupid and hardned without any Sense thereof) and after all cut off in the midst of his days, by a severe, yet right-

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teous Dispensation of the Divine Providence, and how far God hath accepted his Sighs and Tears, we do not know; for secret things belong to God, therefore to God we must leave him; our business is not to judge pre-emptorily concerning the Dead, but to warn and caution the Living.

Remember therefore there is none of you, all, how brisk and gay soever you may be in your Humors, how Confident and secure at present in your Sins, how stubborn and hardened against Reproof, but Sicknes and Death will be able to tame and humble you, to pull down the Pride and Confidence of your Spirits, and fill you with Anguish and Bitterness of Soul in the thoughts of what you have deserv'd, and therefore may justly expect and Fear.

Secondly, Do not delay your Repentance to Sicknes or Death, as he did, because that is as you have heard, the most unreasonable and inconvenient time to set about it. The deceased found it so, and did in effect acknowledge as much, when he wisht he might live his Life over again, that he might spend and imploy it better.

Now what God hath deny'd him, he hath in a great measure granted you; all of you at present are well in Health, and alive before God this Day, but how long you may continue so, none can tell. You know not how soon God may lay his Hand upon you by Death or Sicknes, and cut off the Thread of your Lives unexpectedly to what you now hope for; and if your Repentance is not begun before that time, I fear you will be very unfit to set about it then.

Alas, if Repentance is necessary when we are Sick or Dying, then it is necessary now, 'tis necessary every Hour and Moment of our Lives, because we are Dying daily, and we know not how soon the Fatal stroke may be given, we are daily hastning to the Grave, and we know not how soon our Feet may stumble on the dark Mountains, and if 'tis necessary to repent before we dye, then it is the wisest course we can take to set about it in time, while God doth continue to us Life and Health, which is the fittest

fittest Opportunity for its performance, and if once lost or suffered to slip from us, may never return more, we may never meet with the like again, and then it will be in vain to recal mispent time, or wish we might live our Lives over again, for time past can never be recall'd, the loss of it will be irrecoverable; all that we can do then is to bewail that which we can never repair, and to lament our Folly when 'twill be too late to grow wiser by it.

If you will not learn and take warning by the Example of the Deceas'd, you know not how soon God may make you a warning and Example to others, reduce you into as bad or worse Circumstances than he was in, and be fore'd to acknowledge the Justice of God in all that befall you, as he did.

You have often seen and heard, how the Judgments of God have overtaken, both afar of and nearer hand, many bold and daring Offenders, sinners every whit as Confident and Presuming as any of you now present, and made them Examples of his just Anger and Displeasure against sin; and why then should you think to escape more than they? Tho' you are not Punisht yet, doth it therefore follow you *never* shall? Is not the same Great and Holy God able to punish you, as he hath done them and many others; and hath he not threatned to do it too? Why then should you think your selves more safe and secure from danger than they were, as long as you take so little care to prevent and avoid it?

Go too, therefore, *ye hardened and impenitent Wretches*, ye mockers and deriders of all that is good and serious, ye that are apt to tempt and encourage one another in an evil way; take heed you do not provoke God to make you the next instance of his fierce Anger and Indignation; take heed you do not draw down the Wrath and Vengeance of Heaven upon your heads, and that sooner than now you think for. For truth it self hath told us, *that great Plagues remain for the ungodly*, Psal. 32. 10. *That to God be the Lord beque the issues of Death; but God will wound the Head of his Enemies; and the hairy scalp of such a one as goes on still*
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*in his Wickedness. Psal. 68. 20, 21. When they shall say Peace and Safety, then sudden Destruction shall come upon them, as Tra-
vail upon a Woman with Child, and they shall not escape, 1. Thel. 5.
3. But he that being often reprov'd doth harden his neck, shall sud-
denly be destroy'd and that without Remedy, Prov. 29. 1.*

After all this, can ye imagine, that the Patience of God, which hitherto hath been so forbearing and long-suffering, will always wait in vain, and suffer his goodness to be continually affronted and despised by the vilest of his Creatures? No reason to think that Obstinacy and Impenitency shall always go unpunisht; for you have but *your time*, and others have had *theirs* before you, who now reap the fruit of their Folly, and find to their Grief and Sorrow, what an evil and bitter thing it is, for to sin against God.

Or suppose punishment should be delay'd and no remarkable Judgment should overtake you in this life; but you die in as stupid and secure a manner, as now you live: Yet the less you are punisht here, the more reason you have to fear that God doth but reserve you for greater punishment and vengeance hereafter. For *the Lord knows how to deliver the Godly out of Temptation; but to reserve the wicked to the day of Judgment to be punisht, 2 Pet. 2. 9. The Lord hath made all things for himself, yea even the wicked for the day of Evil, Prov. 16. 4. And again, the wicked is reserv'd to the day of Destruction; they shall be brought forth to the day of Wrath. Job, 21. 30.*

Therefore, Sirs, think often of these things, and weigh them well in your Minds, for as *Moses* told the *Israelites*, it is for your Life, for the Life of your precious and immortal Souls, which are in danger to be lost, and the loss so great as can never be recompenc'd by a whole Life of Sin and Pleasure, much less by those Pleasures, that last but for a moment, and die away in the Enjoyment of them. I shall conclude all with those Remarkable words of the Son of *Sirach*, to this purpose.

Follow not thine own Mind, and thy Strength to walk in the ways of thy Heart.

Say

Say not, who shall contend me for my Works? for the Lord will surely revenge thy Pride.

Say not his Mercy is great, he will be pacify'd for the multitude of my Sins; for Mercy and Wrath come from him, and his indignation resteth upon Sinners.

Make no tarrying to turn unto the Lord, and put not off from day to day; for suddenly shall the wrath of the Lord come forth, and in thy Security thou shalt be destroyed, and Perish in the day of Vengeance, Eccles. 5. 2, 3, 6, 7.

Consider this all ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver, Psalm 50. 22.

FINIS.